



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Paul Eakins
Public Information Officer
213-257-2000
PEakins@da.lacounty.gov
Twitter: @LADAOOffice

June 21, 2019

MS-13 Gang Member Sentenced to LWOP for Girl's Rape, Murder

An MS-13 gang member was sentenced today to life in state prison without the possibility of parole for the 2001 murder of a 13-year-old Whittier girl, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Paul Fidler handed down the sentence of LWOP plus 25 years to life in prison for Jorge Palacios, 41, and denied the defendant's motion for a new trial.

A jury convicted Palacios on March 1, 2018, of one count of first-degree murder and one count of kidnapping to commit another crime. The jury also found true special circumstance allegations that the murder occurred in the commission of rape, lewd acts on a child and kidnapping. Jurors also found true gang and gun allegations.

Deputy District Attorneys Dayan Mathai, Rachel Greene and Mayra Ramirez prosecuted case BA396138.

On June 28, 2001, the naked body of Jacqueline Piazza was found in Elysian Park in Los Angeles. She had been shot twice in the head.

Her murder remained unsolved for nearly a decade, until the Los Angeles Police Department's Robbery-Homicide Division, working with its Gang and Narcotics Division, uncovered new information and presented it to the District Attorney's Hardcore Gang Division. An indictment was unsealed in June 2012 charging four men with the crime.

During the trial, prosecutors said the defendants kidnapped the victim the night before she was found and drove her to a remote area of the park, where they sexually assaulted and killed her.

Rogelio Contreras (dob 8/22/77), Melvin Sandoval (dob 4/24/79) and Santos Grimaldi (dob 8/31/82) also are charged in the crime, but a separate jury will hear their case. A pretrial conference for them is scheduled on Aug. 23 in Department 106 of the Foltz Criminal Justice Center.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.